

Denver Law Review

Volume 47 | Issue 4

Article 18

March 2021

Political Adaption to a Technology Surfeited Society: Comment

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Recommended Citation

Edward Schwartz, Political Adaption to a Technology Surfeited Society: Comment, 47 Denv. L.J. 650 (1970).

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COMMENT

BY EDWARD SCHWARTZ

WELL, I took the paper to be concerned with controls over technology and really the only point I want to make is that there should be no resulting inhibition of research. I think this point was already made when someone suggested that we talk not about the control of science but the control of the technological product. Various types of controls have been mentioned such as the example of offering incentives for users of technological developments to solve some of their problems. Just a few days ago the Federal Aviation Administration was soliciting opinions on a plan they have for making incentive payments for modification of aircraft currently in use that make excessive noise. This is one type of control. Another type of incentive would be to require the manufacturer to be liable for more than just the direct or immediate harms of the product of the technological device. He could be held liable for more remote harms or for harms to other users. In other words, make the entire industry pay for the loss or the harms to the environment. That kind of cost would be passed on to the consumer, so the consumer would, in the end, be exercising control over this by deciding whether he wanted to pay an additional cost or forego using that product. But what I want to emphasize is that controls such as this would act on the product and not affect the research. I think we agree with the premise that in no way do we want to inhibit research and there is no need to go any further.